**Year 8 “Reporting the News” Unit**

(This unit will take approximately 7 weeks to complete)

**Content:**

Students will consider the various forms of news delivery (print, digital, television and radio) and the audiences for whom they are intended. They will learn about the purpose of reporting the news and the differences between informative and persuasive writing about current issues. They will also learn about why it is vital that citizens stay abreast of current issues in the news and why this affects their lives. Students will read newspapers, watch a range of news reports on television, listen to radio news segments and explore digital media throughout this unit.

**Key Terms:**

Informative, persuasive, media, digital media, print media, issue, current affairs, appeal to patriotism, statistics, analogy, figurative language, loaded language, guerrillas, journalist, ethics, broadsheet, tabloid, purpose, intended audience, democracy, citizens, critical literacy, responsibility, publishing, power, tabloid, broadsheet, .

**Aims and Objectives:**

**Skills:** Students will…

* identify the different purposes used by journalists and reporters (such as informative writing and persuasive writing)
* apply new key terms in their own writing
* analyse how writers persuade particular audiences with their use of language
* compare and contrast differences within each mode of media (eg., the *Herald Sun* and *The Age*, ABC and Channel 10, radio stations 3AW and ABC and websites [www.crikey.com.au](http://www.crikey.com.au) and [www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au) or [www.abc.com.au](http://www.abc.com.au)).
* practise their own informative and persuasive writing, using particular language techniques (such as analogies, appeals to patriotism, statistics, figurative language, as well as techniques they learnt in Year 7, such as repetition, use of evidence, rhetorical questions and emotive language, tone)
* practise their speaking and listening skills with regard to both informative and persuasive reporting

**Knowledge:** Students will…

* define key terms (Informative, persuasive, digital media, issue, current affairs, appeal to patriotism, statistics, analogy, figurative language, loaded language, guerrillas, journalist, ethics)
* learn about the different modes of media communication and their various roles in society
* learn about language techniques and the roles they play in informing or persuading audiences
* learn about other methods of communication, such as tone of voice, use of images, sound and music

**Understanding:** Students will…

* understand the purpose of reporting news to a wide audience and why the media plays an important role in Australia, with particular attention towards its role in our democracy
* understand how audiences are persuaded and why it is vital that citizens are critical readers/listeners of the news
* understand how the format of print media, including the use of images, informs and persuades readers
* become aware of the responsibilities journalists have and the Code of Ethics to which they are supposed to adhere
* become aware that the media has a lot of power over its audience-selection of stories that get published and why; no other way to gain information about much of the world except through some sort of media

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| Learning Activities | Student Product | Assessment (S/F) |
| Introduction-give ‘big picture’ idea of what will be involved in this unit and why it is important | Brainstorm about the question “What is the news?” Come to a general consensus about what the ‘news’ is. | F |
| Students should already be keeping a glossary, so draw their attention to the words and terms they will be learning about in this unit and add to it in each lesson with one or two words. | Glossary of key terms used in reporting the news, including a column for using the word/term in their own sentence. | F |
| Read the front pages of *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* and make a list of what is on each front page | List of articles on different papers | F |
| Discussion about why different papers select different stories and why this affects us as their audience | F |
| Discuss layout of both a tabloid and a broadsheet. Consider Fairfax Media’s decision to stop printing *The Age* and why. | List of reasons why print media is dying and why online media is increasing in popularity. | F |
| Book into computer lab or borrow mini laptops and allow students to explore online media. Suggest [www.crikey.com.au](http://www.crikey.com.au) and [www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au) or [www.abc.com.au](http://www.abc.com.au) and allow them some time to explore for themselves. | SWOT analysis of online media | F |
| -Watch *MediaWatch* and discuss journalists’ responsibilities and the code of ethics (see below) they are supposed to abide by. Discuss News Ltd phone hacking scandal.  -Brainstorm other professions that have codes of ethics (eg., medicine, law) and why.  -Have students choose one of the standards below and imagine it didn’t exist. What might an unscrupulous journalist write about if they could? | Discuss why journalists have to abide by a code of ethics. | F |
| List in workbooks | F |
| Paragraph in workbooks | F |
| Choose an issue that is current (some suggestions of current, but also long-standing issues are Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers, Australia’s response to Japanese whaling, gay marriage) | Charts analysing how issue is covered in different forms of media: print/digital/television/radio. Get students to track the issue over two weeks. Have them write one letter to the editor in support of the issue and one letter to the editor opposing the issue-focus on the language techniques (especially loaded language) used to persuade the audience. | F |
| Look at Gorillas vs Guerillas (DIG has DVD; GRA put worksheets on Year 8 wiki and below-first copy is student handout; second copy is teacher version) and discuss persuasive techniques | Simple analysis of persuasive news segment on an issue | S |
| Introduce topic of “Should all students have homework?”  And ask them to vote for ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Ask them for their reasons and make a list of the board under “Yes” and “No”.  See if any ask questions such as, “What does it mean by ALL students?” etc and start to build a definition of the topic-which students should have homework and vice versa. Question the purpose of homework: is it to go over new concepts learnt that day, to revise for a test, to finish incomplete work, to prepare for the next lesson, to do a project/research, to plan for an exam, to read books, newspapers, etc.  And tell them that they will need to define the terms for themselves when they write their pieces. | List in workbooks of what ‘homework’ could mean and what ‘all students’ mean | F |
| Then, show them the YouTube clip of *Today Tonight’s* coverage of the issue. Discuss what they’ve heard, referring them back to the notes they’ve already made thus far. | Discussion | F |
| Then, hand out “Parents in Australia Call for Ban on Homework” (below) and read as a class. | Discuss the contention of the writer and the arguments he/she uses to support that contention. Then, discuss the evidence used to support those arguments, culminating in a table (below) | F |
| Then, hand out “Two hours’ homework a night linked to better school results” and complete the table on this affirmative article. Repeat for any other articles/news segments/radio segments on the issue | Completed table (as above) outlining arguments and evidence that the students can then use themselves in their own writing. | F |
| Write a persuasive letter to Ms Bell (obtain her consent first!) outlining their contention on the issue-discuss bias! | Persuasive letter addressed to Ms Bell (GRA has example copies you could look at-to come, as well as the assessment rubric) | S |
| As an option to one of the writing folio pieces above or in addition (depending on what else you have done/are doing this semester), a group oral presentation could be done where students create a YouTube clip/television news segment/radio segment about the homework issue (or another one that was covered in this unit). Teach about correct script-writing format. | Group oral presentation and their script (script could be another writing folio piece, too, if needed). | S (oral presentation) & S (script-writing folio) |

**‘Gorillas vs Guerillas’ from *Sunday Night***

**Background information:**

*Definition of guerilla*

**Guerilla:** member of independent military force, often revolutionary, which makes surprise attacks on enemy positions, supplies, etc.

*What is coltan?*

It is a mineral used in producing electronics, such as mobile phones, DVD players, video game systems and computers.

It is short for columbite–tantalite and is known industrially as tantalite.



*What do I need to know about the Congo?*

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a country in Africa that has been at war with Rwanda and Uganda (neighbouring African countries) since 1996. 5.4 million people have died in these wars in that time. The country is covered in rainforest (towards the west, along the Congo River), plateaus merging into savannahs in the south and southwest, mountainous terraces in the west and dense grasslands extending beyond the Congo River in the north. High, glaciated mountains are found in the extreme eastern region. Although citizens of the DRC are among the poorest in the world, the country is widely considered to be the richest country in the world regarding natural resources; its untapped deposits of raw minerals are estimated to be worth in excess of US$ 24 trillion. This includes coltan as outlined above. Because of Belgian occupation during the late 1800s until 1960, most of the people speak French, although often as a second language with either their tribal language as their first or another African language, such as Swahili.

**Now, fill in the following responses as you watch the report by Grant Denyer for *Sunday Night*:**

1. **What is the issue?**
2. **What is the reporter’s (Grant Denyer) contention (opinion) on the issue?**
3. **How do you know that this is the reporter’s contention? [remember the persuasive techniques you were taught last year!]**
4. **Choose one or more of the following options in order to describe the tone of the segment:**
5. **Sarcastic**
6. **Frustrated**
7. **Helpless**
8. **Awe-struck**
9. **Resigned**
10. **What is your opinion and why?**
11. **Given your opinion on the issue, was the reporter successful in persuading you? Why/why not?**

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**Now, fill in the following responses as you watch the report by Grant Denyer for *Sunday Night*:**

**What is the issue?**

Saving the Eastern Molong Gorillas from poachers (who sell the gorillas on the illegal exotic animal trade) & miners (who both kill the gorillas for meat and destroy their habitat to mine for coltan to make mobile phones).

**What is the reporter’s (Grant Denyer) contention about the issue?**

That the gorillas should be saved.

1. **How do you know that this is the reporter’s contention? [remember the persuasive techniques you were taught last year!]**

a). the images-close up shots of the gorillas’ eyes, particularly of the babies

b). the words used such as “illegal mining”, “beautiful creatures” are emotive

c). extreme close-up shots of the guns (AK-47s), the guerrillas smoking,

d). the statistics used: “They only have 10 percent of the park under control at the moment and the other 90 percent are gun toting rebels.”

d). personification of gorillas: “Check that out, the whole family's in the tree. Look the big fella's on the move.”…makes audience liken the gorillas to their own family and, thus, feel more sympathy towards them & their plight.

Obviously, there are heaps more than this, so take your pick!

1. **Choose one or more of the following options in order to describe the tone of the segment:**
2. **Sarcastic**
3. **Frustrated**
4. **Helpless**
5. **Awe-struck when discussing the gorillas**
6. **Resigned when discussing the coltan, as though he knows no one would sacrifice their technology. It is very unconvincing.**
7. **What is your opinion and why?**

That we should definitely address the issue of the conservation of the gorillas, but with real knowledge and evidence. Obviously, this is just my personal opinion and when you teach this, you can say whatever you like!!!

1. **Given your opinion on the issue, was the reporter successful in persuading you? Why/why not?**

There is no solution offered, except the implied notion of rescinding our mobile phones. It is not mentioned that there are many others countries, including Australia, that mine coltan or that bigger issues such as third-world poverty and government corruption might also play a part in the necessity of these children to mine for coltan and, as a result, destroy the habitats of the gorillas. Therefore, it is not persuasive, even though the audience would naturally want to help the gorillas.

The context of the issue is barely explained, and while you can assume your intended audience have some general knowledge of Africa, much of what is necessary to know is not provided. Thus, the assumption is that the reporter does not himself know enough about the country, the illegal mining trade and related issues to be able to relate it to the audience. Again, this is not persuasive as it highlights a lack of research on behalf of Denyer.

Obviously, there is a lot more you could mention (the over-use of close-up shots of emotive images, such as the baby gorilla’s eyes, the ridiculous questioning of the zoologist: “Does it melt your little heart…”) so just use whatever you like in order to show students both good and bad pieces of persuasion.

## Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance: Australian Journalists Association Code of Ethics

Respect for the truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, comment and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be responsible and accountable.

Journalists commit themselves to:

* Honesty
* Fairness
* Independence, and
* Respect for the rights of others

Journalists will educate themselves about ethics and apply the following standards:

1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness, and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.

2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief or physical or intellectual disability.

3. Aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source's motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.

4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.

5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.

6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.

7. Do your utmost to ensure disclosure of any direct or indirect payment made for interviews, pictures, information or stories.

8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify your self and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.

9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.

10. Do not plagiarise.

11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.

12. Do your utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.

### Guidance Clause

Basic values often need interpretation and sometimes come into conflict.

Ethical journalism requires conscientious decision-making in context.

Only substantial advancement of the public interest or risk of substantial harm to people allows any standard to be overridden.

**Parents in Australia Call for Ban on Homework**

Published April 10, 2007

Newscorp Australian Papers

* [**Email**](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,264992,00.html)
* [**Share**](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,264992,00.html)
* [**inShare**](javascript:void(0);)**0**

Homework should be scrapped in the early years of primary school and its place in high schools reviewed amid concerns it is a practice without any academic benefits.

The national umbrella organization of parents and citizens groups, the [**Australian Council of State School Organizations**](javascript:siteSearch('Australian%20Council%20of%20State%20School%20Organizations');), has called for a review of the setting of homework, arguing there is no evidence that students benefit from the practice and that it has become an overbearing invasion of family life.

"In primary schools, certainly we have grave doubts about the need for homework in most years," said council executive officer Terry Aulich. "There's nothing to prove homework gives kids an advantage in terms of literacy and numeracy."

Aulich said homework was not addressed in teacher education courses, and when the council first raised it as a topic for its national conference, some teachers considered it a low-level issue.

"They thought it wasn't worthy of intellectual study ... as if it were a minor issue, like the tuck shop," he said.

A discussion paper by the council says a review of the international research into homework reveals the evidence "is at best ambivalent" about the benefits.

Even in high school, the correlation between homework and performance is negligible.

The paper says some U.S. and British studies link homework to improved grades, school performance, attitude towards learning and time-management skills, with one arguing that "the more homework students complete, especially from grades 6 to 12, the better they do in school".

But a review of British research found the positive relationship was only true for high school.

Other studies found homework contributed to physical and emotional exhaustion and allowed little or no time for leisure and family activities.

An analysis of the International Trends in Mathematics and Science Study, which compares students in 50 countries, stated: "The overall correlations between national average student achievement and national averages in amount of homework assigned are all negative."

Aulich called for research on homework's effect on families and how children develop socially and intellectually.

Reuben Fromant, 8, is in third grade at a public school in Sydney's inner west and has been doing weekly homework since first grade, involving spelling lists, English comprehension and maths. His father, Bradley, said part of the pressure on teachers to set homework came from parents, who held the mistaken belief their child would be disadvantaged without it.

Fromant said the greatest value of homework was in the practice of doing it, but he was unconvinced of its necessity and supported a review.

"I support it inasmuch as at least it's good practice, but whether or not there's any scholastic advantage ... I don't think so," he said.

Read more: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,264992,00.html#ixzz1vrHfDd86>

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| **Article, writer, date and publication** | **Contention** | **Arguments** | **Evidence** |
| “Parents in Australia Call for Ban on Homework” 10 April 2007, www.foxnews.com | Homework should not be given to primary school students and should be reviewed about being given to high school students. | There is no evidence that homework has benefits, so why make students do it? | - “There’s nothing to prove that homework gives kids an advantage in terms of literacy and numeracy.”  - The correlation between homework and performance is negligible in high school |
|  |  | Homework interferes with family time. | “Other studies found homework…allowed little or no time for leisure and family activities.” |
|  |  | Homework leads to physical and emotional exhaustion |  |
|  |  | Homework actually has negative effects on students | -the International Trends in Mathematics and Science Study, which compares students in 50 countries, stated “The overall correlations between national average student achievement and national averages in amount of homework assigned are all negative.” |
|  |  | Rebuttal paragraph: the US & UK have done studies where homework has been linked to improved grades, school performance, attitude towards learning and time-management skills. | -One study argued that, “the more homework students complete, especially from grades 6-12, the better they do in school.”  -a review of this research found that the positive relationship was only true for high school students. |

**Primary students too young to be doing homework**

* by: *Lucy Hood*
* From:[*The Advertiser*](http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/)
* April 24, 201012:01AM



Darren Simmons and his daughter Maddi, 10, who is in Yr 5 at Westminister College. Picture: Sarah Reed *Source:* The Advertiser

**HOMEWORK should be banned until high school, a literacy expert says.**

Flinders University lecturer in education Dr Barbara Nielsen said homework had no educational benefit for primary school-aged children.

Instead, younger children should spend their after-school hours socialising, playing and spending quality time with their parents, she said.

Her call defies a growing trend that started in the mid-90s to make primary students do homework.

Dr Nielsen said it was fuelled by misunderstanding parents and competition among schools to strive for educational excellence.

"It's very questionable in primary years and sad that schools don't step back and think, `we don't live our lives in academia'," she said. "During your childhood you develop social skills, join sporting clubs and make friends.

"But if (students') entire waking moments are spent inside at school and then inside doing homework, we will breed overweight couch potatoes."

Dr Nielsen said parents' time with their children was precious and should be spent having "rich oral interactions".

"When parents are there as the policemen or jailers making their children do their homework, that really changes the relationship," she said.

"A lot of parents feel inadequate and stressed."

Psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg agreed, saying homework was not in the best interests of the healthy development of a family, describing it as "modern-day cod liver oil".

"Homework hijacks family life and five words guaranteed to start an argument are `you should do your homework'," he said. "Many of the kids I surveyed thought homework is a waste of time, they copy and paste directly from the internet and 36 per cent admit to parents doing it for them."

SA Primary Principals Association president Steve Portlock said there was now a much greater emphasis on homework in primary schools compared to 20 years ago.

But he said teachers were mixing up homework activities, setting tasks such as exercise and helping around the home.

"Homework . . . in the old days was doing 20 sums and going home and doing another 20," he said.

"But now homework can be tasks like asking parents about topical issues, doing chores, cooking dinner and physical activity - things that are relevant to students' lives."

An Education Department spokeswoman said regulations allowed teachers to set homework appropriate to the age and ability of children in their class but also to respond to individual circumstances and parents' objections.

**Two hours' homework a night linked to better school results**

Any time spent on homework shows benefits, according to study published by Department



The benefits of homework were greatest for those who did two to three hours a night, the study found. Photograph: RayArt Graphics/Alamy

Spending more than two hours a night doing homework is linked to achieving better results in English, maths and science, according to a major study which has tracked the progress of 3,000 children over the past 15 years.

Spending any time doing homework showed benefits, but the effects were greater for students who put in two to three hours a night, according to [the study](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research.html) published by the Department for Education.

The finding on homework runs counter to [previous research](http://www.emie.ac.uk/nfer/publications/HWK01/HWK01_home.cfm?publicationID=501&title=Homework:%20a%20review%20of%20recent%20research) which shows a "relatively modest" link between homework and achievement at secondary school.

The academics involved in the latest research say their study emphasises what students actually do, rather than how much work the school has set.

[Pam Sammons, a professor of education at Oxford University](http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/about-us/directory/professor-pam-sammons/), said that time spent on homework reflected the influence of the school – whether pupils were expected to do homework – as well as children's enjoyment of their subjects.

Sammons said: "That's one of the reasons Indian and Chinese children do better. They tend to put more time in. It's to do with your effort as well as your ability.

"What we're not saying is that everyone should do large amounts, but if we could shift some of those who spend no time or half an hour into [doing] one to two hours – one of the reasons private [schools](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/schools)' results are better is that there's more expectation of homework."

The study controlled for social class, and whether pupils had a quiet place in which to do their homework, but still found a benefit, Sammons said.

The research was conducted by academics from the Institute of Education, Oxford and Birkbeck College, part of the university of London. It has tracked around 3,000 children from pre-school to the age of 14.

It also finds that students who reported that they enjoyed school got better results. "This is in contrast to findings during primary school where 'enjoyment of school' was not related to academic attainment," researchers said.

Schools could ensure children had a better experience by improving the "behavioural climate", making schoolwork interesting and making children feel supported by teachers, Sammons said.

The research shows that working-class parents can help their children succeed "against the odds" by having high aspirations for them.

Children who did well from disadvantaged backgrounds were backed by parents who valued learning and encouraged extra-curricular activities. "Parents' own resilience in the face of hardship provided a role model for their children's efforts," the research says.

The study underlines the importance of a good primary school. Children who attended an "academically effective" primary school did better at maths and science in later life. The study did not find a link with performance in English.

Ministers have [scrapped guidelines](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/mar/04/homework-guidelines-scrapped) setting out how much homework children should be set amid criticism that it can interfere with family life.

Under the last government, guidance was issued to all schools recommending they have a policy on homework.

The guidelines suggested children aged five to seven should be set an hour a week, rising to half an hour a night for seven- to 11-year-olds. Secondary schools were encouraged to set up to two and a half hours a night for children aged 14-16.

Scrapping the guidelines frees headteachers to set their own homework policy, the government says.